

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
AGRICULTURE
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:678
ANSWERED ON:03.03.2008
DECLINE IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE
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Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether water levels are shrinking in the rainfed areas of the country adversely affecting agricultural produce;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether poverty and distress are rampant in the rainfed areas;
- (d) if so, the details thereof;
- (e) whether the Government proposes to set up a National Authority for Sustainable Development of Rainfed Areas for managing all the watershed programmes funded by the Government; and
- (f) if so, the details thereof?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA)

(a) & (b): A comparison of depth to water level of the observation well of CGWB for pre-monsoon (May, 2006) with respect to decadal mean (1996-2005) reveals that there is general rise in water level in the range of 0-4 m in peninsular India, Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Orissa. In Northern India there is general fall in water level in the range of 0- 2 m. However, there is rise in the water level in the Northern part of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh . In Central India, there is mixed trend of rise and fall in water level. In addition, isolated patches of rise or fall of water level in the range of 0-2 m have been observed through out the country. Similarly a comparison of depth to water level during post monsoon (November, 2006) with decadal mean (1996-2005) reveals that there is general rise in water level in the range of 0-2 m in peninsular India, Coastal Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat. However in some parts of Karnataka, South Andhra Pradesh and isolated pockets of Maharastra a fall in the range of 0-2 m have been recorded. In Northern India, there is general fall in water level in the range of 0-2 m.

(c)&(d): The rainfed areas are generally subject to wind and water erosion and are in different stages of degradation, thus prohibiting intensive agricultural production in these areas. These areas depend on monsoon rains for agricultural production and are characterized with peculiar hydrological and pedological problems. They are also characterized with low levels of productivity and low input use. The lower productivity in these areas is further compounded by uncertainty of production in successive crop years. These areas also face high variability of rainfall, resulting in wide variations and instability in agricultural yields. These areas also have a low credit absorption capacity since uncertainty prevails in production in these areas. Therefore, the farmers in these areas are by and large at a disadvantage and therefore, are poor. In the recent past some cases of distress have been noticed in 31 districts of four states viz., Andhra Pradesh (Guntur, Praksam, Nellore, Kurnool, Cuddapah, Chittoor, Anantapur, Ranga Reddy, Medak, Nalgonda, Mahbub Nagar, Warangal, Khammam, Karim Nagar, Nizamabad and Adilabad), Karnataka (Belgaum, Shimogha, Chitradurga, Hassan, Chikmagalur and Kodagu), Kerala (Palakkad, Wayanad and, Kasargod) and Maharastra (Akola, Wardha, Amaravathi, Buldhana, Wasin and Yewatmal).

(e)&(f): The Government of India has set up the National Rainfed Area Authority (NRAA) on 03.11.2006 with an objective to focus on the problems of farmers in rainfed areas. The Authority is a two tier structure. The first tier is the Governing Board to provide necessary leadership and appropriate coordination in implementation of programmes. The Governing Board is chaired by the Union Agriculture Minister and co- chaired by the Union Rural Development Minister. The Union Ministers of Water Resources and Environment & Forests, Member (Agriculture) Planning Commission, Secretaries of Ministries/Department of Agriculture & Cooperation, Rural Development, Water Resources, Environment & Forests, Panchyati Raj, Chairman of NABARD, One Farmer's representative/organization and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of NRAA are the other members. The second tier is the Executive Committee which is headed by CEO, NRAA. Five eminent Experts on full time basis in the field of water management, agriculture / horticulture, animal husbandry & fisheries, forestry and watershed development, one representative each from Ministries of Rural Development, Agriculture, Environment & Forests, Panchayati Raj and Water Resources, Advisor (Agriculture) Planning Commission, Director of Central Arid Zone Research Institute (CAZRI, Jodhpur), Director of Central Reseach Institute for Dryland Agriculture, Hyderabad are other members of the Executive Committee. The Authority is expected to provide much needed knowledge inputs regarding systematic up-gradation and management of country's rainfed agriculture. The Authority is a Policy making and monitoring body charged with the role of examining guidelines of various existing schemes. Its mandate is wider than mere water conservation and covers all aspects of sustainable and holistic development of rainfed areas, including appropriate farming and livelihood system

approaches.